United Nations A/56/175

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 July 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session
Item 111 (c) of the preliminary list*
Environment and sustainable development

Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General**

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 55/204, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-sixth session on the outcome of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. It also requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution.

2. In its resolution 52/198, the General Assembly decided to approve the institutional linkage between the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations, in accordance with the offer made by the Secretary-General and accepted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its first session.

3. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to review the functioning of the institutional linkage, including the financing arrangements, no later than 31 December 2000, in consultation with the Conference of the Parties, with a view to making such modifications as might be considered desirable by the General Assembly and the Conference of the Parties, and to report thereon to the Assembly.

II. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 54/223

A. Adoption of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the in-depth review and analysis of the reports submitted at the third and fourth sessions of the Conference of the Parties

4. By its decision 6/COP.3, the Conference of the Parties decided to establish an ad hoc working group to review and analyse in depth, at the fourth session, reports submitted at its third session and reports that would be submitted at its fourth session in order to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention. By the same decision, the Executive Secretary of the Convention was requested to make all necessary arrangements for

* A/56/50.

** The footnote requested by General Assembly resolution 54/248 was not included in the submission.

01-45362 (E) 130801

the above-mentioned ad hoc working group (AHWG) to fulfil its mandate and to meet at the fourth session.

5. The Conference of the Parties decided that all national reports submitted at its third and fourth sessions would be reviewed individually by AHWG before the beginning of its fifth session. The Conference of the Parties requested AHWG to conclude the process of reviewing all remaining reports submitted at the third and fourth sessions of the Conference of the Parties by convening an inter-sessional meeting of up to 15 working days between the fourth and fifth sessions.

6. Finally, the Conference of the Parties decided that AHWG would submit an interim report on its work to the Conference of the Parties at its fourth session and a comprehensive report on its conclusions and concrete recommendations for further steps on the implementation. That report was adopted by the Conference of the Parties as an annex to its decision 2/COP.4. Owing to the size of the report review exercise, the Parties also agreed on an inter-sessional meeting of up to 15 working days of AHWG before the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties. That was seen to be a necessary arrangement for processing the backlog of reports through an equitable review of all country reports submitted to the secretariat at the third and fourth sessions of the Conference of the Parties. AHWG was also requested to submit a comprehensive report to the Conference of the Parties at its fifth session on its conclusions and concrete recommendations on further steps on the implementation.

7. Further to consultations with interest and regional groups and in order to facilitate the decision on the ad hoc working group, the Secretariat prepared document ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.7 (A), outlining a proposal for the work plan of the ad hoc working group and its objectives. That document was well received by the Parties.

Ad Hoc Working Group convened during the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties

8. Pursuant to decision 1/COP.4, AHWG received its procedural guidelines. One of the criteria for selecting national reports to be reviewed at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties was the date of ratification and the adoption and/or elaboration of a national action programme. Some subregional and regional reports were also considered. In that context, inputs from reports of developed country Parties, United Nations organizations, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, that supported project activities in the concerned affected country Parties, were expected to also enrich that review.

9. AHWG, without neglecting other issues contained in reports, was requested to review and analyse reports by adopting thematic approaches, as appropriate, based on, inter alia, the following topics:

(a) Identification of best practices and successes in implementing the Convention;

(b) Identification of main difficulties, obstacles and challenges in implementing the Convention;

(c) Level of participation of all actors, including financial and technical support from developed countries, in the implementation process;

(d) Linkages and synergies with other conventions on environment and development;

(e) Strategies established within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies.

10. The Group had to review the reports of 10 African, 6 Asian and 4 Latin American countries, in addition to those of 2 countries from regional implementation annex IV and one report from Eastern Europe. Regional and subregional activities for all annexes were to be discussed at the end of the review process for each regional annex, within the time frame available.

11. The review of national reports provided a more specific complement to the brief review that took place in the Committee of the Whole of the Conference of the Parties on the overview and the synthetic aspects of the implementation of the Convention. The initial work of AHWG was considered an iterative process aiming at maximizing the lessons from experience as distilled through the national reports.

12. At its first session, AHWG reviewed the following reports:

(a) National reports: Argentina, Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Cuba, Italy, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Mali, Mongolia, Namibia, Portugal, Republic of Moldova,

Senegal, Swaziland, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan;

(b) Subregional reports: Arab Maghreb Union, Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel/Economic Community of West African States, Southern African Development Community and Intergovernmental Authority on Development;

(c) Regional Reports: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and northern Mediterranean.

13. Comments and exchanges following the presentation of national reports aimed at seeking or providing complementary clarifications, offering advice or highlighting areas of common interest. Affected countries from the same region often focused on shared areas of concern. Developed country Parties emphasized relevant methodologies and approaches. The co-chairmen expressed satisfaction with the high quality of the presentations and the rich content of the exchanges. They commended affected country Parties for their thorough preparation and excellent delivery. Likewise, participants expressed appreciation for the comprehensive extent of the coverage of the reports, substantive information content, the candid assessment of obstacles and constraints and the useful summary of lessons learned.

14. On the whole, however, the participants felt that the exchanges did not draw well-defined conclusions from the analysis of the reports and thus did not provide sufficient elements to chart the path forward for the implementation process. Hence, many participants called for more concrete and constructive feedback.

Presentations of affected country Parties

15. National reports usually covered such matters as institutional development, legislative, policy and enabling frameworks, national coordination, participatory mechanisms and partnership networking, awareness-raising and capacity-building, funding issues and, many times, benchmarks and indicators.

16. In doing so, the reports also covered questions pertaining to inter-ministerial cooperation, the field level consultative process and the mobilization of civil society. They called for a better integration of long-term environmental measures into economic policies, instruments and practices. The lack of predictable financial support was consistently identified as a pressing constraint at a time when national coordination bodies in charge of the Convention were planning to move from preparation of national action programmes to the operational phase of field activities. The role of the Global Mechanism in facilitating and securing funding was acknowledged.

Presentation of subregional and regional programmes

17. Subregional and regional institutions reported on institutional developments, such as the establishment of ministerial consultations, integrated planning frameworks, coordination committees and thematic groups and the use of Internet exchange forums. It was highlighted that subregional action programmes have the potential to turn into a cost-effective channel for providing support for the national action programmes in the concerned subregions. Regional and subregional institutions assisted member States in the preparations for the Conference of the Parties and some delegations stated that their useful role deserved enhanced support. There was emphasis on South-South cooperation, finding responses to challenges in areas of common interest, notably in regard to the work of the Committee on Science and Technology. Transboundary pilot projects had been launched between neighbouring countries in some subregions. Member States had received support for the preparation of national action programmes. Technical difficulties related notably to the harmonization of evaluation parameters, benchmarks and indicators. The transaction cost of coordination and networking was recalled.

18. The inter-sessional meeting of AHWG was convened pursuant to decision 1/COP.4. It was opened in Bonn, Germany, on 16 March 2001, by the Executive Secretary of the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification. The resumed session of AHWG reviewed the reports of 32 African, 30 Asian and 26 Latin American and the Caribbean countries, in addition to those of 4 northern Mediterranean and other affected countries and 3 reports from central and eastern European countries. Subregional activities for regional implementation annexes II and III were likewise presented. The resumed session of AHWG heard the presentation of national reports from the following affected country Parties (Parties which had completed their national action programmes are marked with an asterisk):

Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia,* Fiji, Gambia,* Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger,* Nigeria,* Oman, Pakistan,* Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Turkey, Uganda,* United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen,* Zambia and Zimbabwe.*

19. AHWG further heard the presentation of the reports of the following developed country Parties: Australia (also on behalf of Japan, Canada and Switzerland), Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

20. AHWG also heard the presentations of the following United Nations organizations as well as international and multilateral agencies: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme, World Meteorological Organization, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and Arab Centre for Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD).

21. Reports from the following countries were reviewed without presentations: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Belgium, Belize, Denmark, Dominica, Italy, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mozambique, Niue (New Zealand), Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Singapore, Spain (as developed country Party) and Tuvalu.

22. The presentations during the inter-sessional meeting of AHWG demonstrated the worldwide mobilization of affected country Parties to combat desertification. Similarities and features deemed common to affected developing country Parties include the following: (a) Parties have taken institutional measures to implement the Convention; (b) they face the difficulty of harmonizing a multitude of pertinent programming instruments dealing with the management of natural resources; (c) in this context, they express the need for some technical and financial support to carry the process forward; (d) the intertwined challenge of land degradation and poverty threatens to worsen in the current context of climate change.

23. The developed country Parties emphasized the links of the Convention with such areas of concern as poverty reduction, landscape conservation, ecological sustainability and productivity enhancement. They endorsed in that context a holistic approach. They spelled out their efforts in supporting the implementation process and made proposals for further improvements. Developed country Parties presented their respective policy objectives for development cooperation, their thematic areas of support, and the geographical coverage of their intervention, and estimated corresponding financial investments as they spelled out some of their ongoing activities. Parties expressed a willingness to promote effective partnership with all stakeholders and to share knowledge and technical expertise. There was general acknowledgement that further awareness-raising, particularly in the field, was needed and they committed themselves to further improving the information exchange.

24. Progress was also achieved in triggering a broad dialogue in the context of preparing national action programmes and in ensuring widespread dissemination and ownership of the national action programme. The support of the resident coordinators of the United Nations system was found to be effective whenever resources were made available to the UNDP field offices to support the national action programme process. At times, it was possible to improve the conditions for partnership through the identification and coordination of complementary initiatives by means of sectoral or thematic planning instruments.

B. Programme and budget: adjustment to the budget for the biennium 2000-2001

25. The Executive Secretary of the secretariat of the Convention presented its report on programme and budget to the Conference of Parties at its fourth session (see ICCD/COP(4)/2 and addenda). The Conference of the Parties increased the core budget of the Convention

for the biennium 2000-2001 by US$ 335,300 for the logistical costs of the inter-sessional meeting of AHWG.

26. The Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary to continue consultations with the relevant departments of the United Nations in order to secure more resources from overhead to fund the Convention's activities, including those related to liaison arrangements with United Nations Headquarters.

27. The Conference of the Parties also reconfirmed its authorization to the Executive Secretary, as contained in decision 3/COP.3, to make transfers between each of the main appropriation lines 1 to 6 of the approved budget for the biennium 2000-2001, up to an aggregate limit of 15 per cent of the total estimated expenditure for those appropriation lines, provided that a further limitation of up to minus 25 per cent of each such appropriation line would apply, particularly for the financing of the two meetings of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties and the meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology as contained in ICCD/COP(4)/2/Add.6, paragraph 22.

28. The Conference of the Parties noted the work being done to establish common administrative services in Bonn with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and accordingly requested the Executive Secretary to report to it at its fifth session any outcome taking into account the unique features of the Convention, as well as the financial rules of the Conference of the Parties.

C. Procedure for the review of the implementation of the Convention

29. Following the remarkable number and quality of reports submitted by the affected African country Parties, the Conference of the Parties decided to establish an ad hoc working group to review and analyse in depth, reports submitted at its third and fourth sessions in order to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention.

30. The Conference at its third session invited Parties and other interested institutions and organizations, including non-governmental organizations, to submit written proposals and suggestions on the need for the establishment of a committee to review the implementation of the Convention no later than 30 April 2000, to be compiled, summarized and circulated by the secretariat in order to further develop the existing review system and to facilitate consideration, and to take a decision on the issue at its fourth session and, if necessary, at its fifth session.

31. At its fourth session, having taken into account the experience and comprehensive report of AHWG, the Conference of the Parties decided that further proposals and suggestions by Parties and other interested institutions on concrete recommendations for the review of implementation of the Convention, including proposals on procedures and modalities for the establishment of a committee to review the implementation of the Convention, would be submitted through the secretariat for consideration at the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties.

D. Additional regional implementation annex to the Convention for central and eastern Europe

32. During its second session, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision 11/COP.2, in which it urged observer countries from central and eastern Europe to take appropriate action to become parties to the Convention and invited them to produce a draft additional regional implementation annex to the Convention for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its third session.

33. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/223, in which it welcomed the progress made in producing a draft additional regional implementation annex to the Convention for countries of Eastern and Central Europe, and invited those countries to continue their efforts towards acceding to the Convention,

34. At its third session, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision 7/COP.3, in which it invited the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and all Parties to the Convention to continue, under the auspices of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties, the process of consultations on the draft additional implementation annex with a view to adopting it at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties.

35. At its meeting on 23 March 2000, the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties recommended that the

Conference of the Parties consider, for adoption at its fourth session, the proposed additional regional implementation annex.

36. At its fourth session, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision 7/COP.4, in which it decided to adopt as annex V to the Convention the regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern Europe annexed to the decision. In doing so, the Conference of the Parties acknowledged that the implementation of the regional annex V to the Convention should not impact on the provision of financial resources for the implementation of the Convention, especially for the implementation of annexes of affected developing country Parties, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

E. Action by States

37. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 55/204, the General Assembly called upon all countries that were not yet parties to the Convention to ratify or accede to the Convention as soon as possible.

38. As of 15 June 2001, instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession had been deposited by the following 174 States and one regional economic integration organizations:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, European Community, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Niue, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

F. Arrangements for the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties

39. At the last meeting of its fourth session, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision 22/COP.4, by which it decided that the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties would be held at Bonn, Germany, the site of the Convention secretariat, from 17 to 28 September 2001, in the event that no Party made an offer to host that session and to meet the additional financial cost. Accordingly, it invited the Executive Secretary in consultation with the Bureau to accommodate, by 31 March 2001, any offer from a Party to host the fifth session and requested the Executive Secretary to take the necessary measures to prepare for the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties.

40. Unfortunately, the Government of Germany informed the secretariat of its difficulty in hosting the Conference of the Parties. The Government of Germany proposed as an alternative to hold the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties in the year 2002. This option, however, was judged contrary to the provisions of the Convention by the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties. Consequently, pursuant to

the provisions of decision 22/COP.4, and after deliberation, the Bureau decided to hold the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties from 1 to 12 October 2001 in Geneva, at the Palais des Nations, headquarters of the United Nations Office in Europe.

III. Administrative linkages with the United Nations

41. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/198 of 18 December 1997, in which the Assembly approved the institutional linkage between the secretariat of the Convention and the United Nations, the Secretary-General made a proposal to establish the transitional arrangements for administrative support to the secretariat of the Convention for 1999-2000. That proposal was accepted by the Conference of the Parties at its first session (decision 3/COP.1).

42. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to review the functioning of the institutional linkage, including the financing arrangements, in consultation with the Conference of the Parties, with a view to making such modifications as might be considered desirable by the Assembly and the Conference of the Parties, and to report thereon to the Assembly.

43. In line with the decisions and resolutions cited above, the head of the Convention secretariat is appointed by the Secretary-General and is accountable to the Conference of the Parties. He reports to the Secretary-General on administrative matters through the Under-Secretary-General for Management and on other matters through the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

44. No significant changes have since taken place in the substantive linkage. As regards administrative matters, the Executive Secretary has functioned within the scope of a broad delegation of authority which, over the years and as reported to the Conference of the Parties at its fourth session, has adapted to changing circumstances and has resulted in a steadily greater assumption of administrative responsibility by the Convention secretariat. At the same time, and in consultation with the United Nations, a progressively larger portion of the administrative support charges levied for the reimbursement of administrative servicing costs has been re-allotted to the Convention secretariat.

45. The main objective of the secretariat's administrative unit has been to increase efficiency and effectiveness in responding to the needs of the Parties. In a bid to minimize the transaction costs with the United Nations Office at Geneva, the secretariat has continued to take on more administrative and financial functions previously performed by the United Nations Office at Geneva. As regards administrative support, the Executive Secretary, in agreement with the Department of Management, has gradually taken over most of the responsibility for financial and personnel administration of the Convention secretariat. A substantial part of the support costs is currently re-allotted back to the secretariat through the financing of specific posts or other administrative requirements of the secretariat.

46. The objective jointly pursued by the Department of Management and the Convention secretariat has been to more clearly define the responsibilities of the Executive Secretary, in administrative matters, as well as his accountability to the Conference of the Parties and to the Secretary-General. Thus, responsibility for authorizing and providing travel arrangements for the Convention staff is now vested in the Executive Secretary. He, or selected officers to whom he has delegated authority, either certify financial obligations or approve payments for goods received and services rendered. The Executive Secretary has broad authority, comparable to that of the head of a major programme at the United Nations, to approve purchases of equipment and services. On the personnel side, the administration of the Staff Rules in respect of staff of the Convention secretariat (including staff entitlements) rests with the Executive Secretary. The Secretary-General continues to retain his authority in disciplinary and appeal matters. Discussions are under way with the relevant department at the United Nations Office at Geneva to establish a memorandum of understanding whereby the secretariat will receive services on a cost-per-service basis. The Executive Secretary will continue to seek advice on policy matters and specific administrative issues from the Department of Management.

47. In summary, therefore, it is considered that the institutional linkage between the Convention secretariat and the United Nations, and the related administrative arrangements which have developed, have provided and continue to provide a sound basis for the day-to-day functioning of the Convention secretariat. They clearly define the accountability of

the Executive Secretary to the Conference of the Parties and to the Secretary-General and, at the same time, delineate the responsibility of the United Nations for providing the necessary support services as well as advice to the Executive Secretary when requested.

48. Accordingly, the General Assembly may wish to approve the continuation of the current institutional linkage, and related administrative arrangements, as outlined in the present chapter, for a further five-year period, to be reviewed by the Assembly and the Conference of the Parties not later than 31 December 2006.

IV. Action requested of the General Assembly

49. In paragraph 17 of its resolution 55/204, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-sixth session on the implementation of that resolution as well as on the outcome of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties. The present report has been produced in response to that request.

50. The General Assembly may also wish to reiterate its appeal to the States which have not yet ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

51. In accordance with the institutional arrangements between the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the United Nations and paragraph 15 of resolution 55/204, the General Assembly may also wish to take action regarding the provision made in the proposed calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 2002-2003 for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, including the sixth ordinary session of the Conference of the Parties and meetings of its subsidiary bodies.

52. The General Assembly may also wish to take note of the decision adopted by the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) at its last meeting recognizing fully that the issue of land degradation is integral to the pursuit of sustainable development and poverty alleviation and synergies among the global environmental conventions and deciding to designate "land degradation (desertification and deforestation) as a GEF focal area as a means for enhancing GEF support for the successful implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification".

53. The General Assembly may also wish to make an appeal for the funding of the Convention, particularly regarding contributions to the core budget, which are to be paid promptly every 1 January.